

the traitor after a Norman envoy had read aloud in the market-place the proclamation by which the King of Sicily conferred upon him the office of waH. The Sicilian fleet then appeared off the town, but was unable to master it (summer of 1x48), George of Antioch was not in command when this repulse took place, but soon after he returned from his brilliant raids on the Greek Empire and was given orders for a great enterprise. El-Hasan gives the impression of a gallant and honourable prince; he had been faithful to his treaties with Roger, but after long years of a practical vassalage, he was now marked down for a final overthrow. George collected a fleet of two hundred and fifty vessels and transports in order to blind the Ziridite prince to his purpose, he informed him by pigeon-post from Pantelleria that his real object was Constantinople*. An absence of wind, however, made the sudden night assault on Al Mahdia which he contemplated, and when he appeared before the city (June 22, 1148), El-Hasan was well aware of the Admiral's object. Nor was he deceived by the Admiral's further assurance that he had come to aid him against his vassal town of

Gabte* and
to secure the punishment of Yusuf s
murderers*
The whole coast was afflicted by
famine, and Al
Mahdia contained provisions only for
a month;
the unfortunate Hasan, therefore, to©
proud to
make any further surrender to the
Sicilians, and
too fond of his people to them to &